

Dear Parents, Staff and Governors,

Welcome to Week 8. As you will be aware, this week will follow the same pattern as Week 6, with small group activities for all pupils (either on Zoom or pre-recorded) rather than last week's phone calls to parents. Next week, there will be a repeat of the 'phone calls, providing a second opportunity for parents to ask questions about learning at home. We will also be talking to parents about provision on-site after half term.

The provision this week is as follows:

- Four daily tasks for the 80% pupils learning at home (Written task, Practical Maths, Online activity, Outdoors activity)
- Subject leader specials in Art, Music, Well-being and Science (fortnightly for Weeks 7 and 8)
- A small group activity for each child with their teacher
- Daily Zoom stories at 1pm (Meeting ID = 657 963 1374, Password = asdf5_)
- Three assemblies
- A reassuring message for parents on youtube
- Reading book exchange available in the foyer from 9.30-2.30
- Teaching of the four daily tasks and school lunches for the 20% on-site (Key Worker children and vulnerable families)

Of course, the phrase of the moment is 'phased return'. Like many of you, I'm sure, I eagerly opened the freshly published government document yesterday to discover details of how schools should approach a phased return for Reception and Year 1. This is attached. The teachers and support staff will be meeting with me on Thursday to create a positive route forward which suits the needs of the Farncombe community. The GLP headteachers have also been meeting remotely to discuss the current situation, with an aim of finding a common strategy which protects the safety and well-being of staff and pupils. Across the town, we ask for understanding, support and flexibility as the arrangements for your family may not be ideal, but we are living in less than ideal times.

At the time of writing, it is clear that there is an aim for our Year 2 pupils to return for 'a month' before the summer. Mrs Watson, Mrs Thomas and I have already begun to consider how our Year 2s can enjoy the important rituals of saying goodbye to infant school and preparing for the increased independence of junior school, without the usual large scale occasions. Plans are already in place to arrange leavers' hoodies and yearbooks and The Friends Association will soon be in touch with further details. Once the government release more information about Year 2 pupils, we will be able to plan further.

In terms of Year 1 and Reception children, the current aim is for these pupils to attend school every day from 1st June, but on a part-time basis, working in small groups. This arrangement will probably consist of Year 1 attending each morning with Reception attending in the afternoons, although this may be subject to change. It may be that instead of this arrangement, each class is split into two groups, with half attending in the morning

and half in the afternoon. There will be a fifth group of the current on-site learners, drawn from key worker and vulnerable families. Both systems neatly fill our five classrooms.

Within either system, each year group will be split into two small groups (approximately 15-17 children, with some in the KW/V group and others unable to attend due to ill health or specific family contexts). The children in each group will not encounter other groups, or share indoors space with them. There will be a rota of staff, with each group receiving teaching and supervision from four or five adults during the week, who will not have spent time with the other children.

Within these groups, each child will have their own equipment for learning stored individually in their tray, avoiding the need for communal items. As the groups will be smaller than the usual classes, learning will be more intense, so the requirement to complete work at home with YR and Y1 will end. Feel free to enjoy your child's company for half of each day, knowing that they have already completed the necessary Reading, Writing and Mathematical challenges for their academic development.

Of course, academic development is arguably less important than personal, social and emotional development, particularly for our young pupils. Therefore, we will not be damaging their ability to connect with others, form good relationships and feel supported and cared for by adults in school by insisting on social distancing. Instead, we will operate a policy of 'bubbles' or 'micro-schools' with pupils only encountering a small number of other pupils and members of staff for a limited amount of time each day. This aims to reduce viral load and the probability of transmitting the virus.

If your child has been at home with you for the past two months, this may all seem daunting and a huge change to the current provision. However, as mentioned above, our numbers on-site have gradually crept up to 20%. Following the publication of the attached document, I expect our numbers on-site to rise to around 30%, as the guidance now says *'Education and childcare settings are already open to priority groups. Now that we have made progress in reducing the transmission of coronavirus we are encouraging all eligible children to attend - it is no longer necessary for parents of eligible children to keep them at home.'*

We are now in our fourth iteration of partial opening. In Week 1 when we only had a tiny number of pupils on-site, they were taught in one group. In Week 2, as numbers gradually increased, we split the pupils into two groups, but they continued to share playtimes and lunchtimes. Following Easter, in Week 5, the pupils were split into three groups (YR, Y1 and Y2) for teaching, with joint playtimes and lunchtimes. This week, we have further separated the children by staggering playtimes and lunchtimes, ensuring they only encounter a small group of other children. They are also not sharing indoor space or staff. Our current safety procedures are as follows:

- Parents drop off at the hall door and do not enter the building
- Pupils remain in small group 'bubble' minimising social contact with others
- Classrooms are only used by one group of pupils, minimising the spread of infection on surfaces

- Staff only teach one group, avoiding transmitting infection from one group to another
- Staff apply social distancing towards one another, but not within their small teaching group
- Lunchtimes are staggered and specific tables are allocated to each group
- Playtimes are staggered, with each group having a different time to the others
- Resources are stored in individual trays rather than communally (pencils, rubbers etc.)
- Anyone showing symptoms stays off-site

Although this may be partly luck, it is worth noting that by following our current safety measures, not one on-site pupil or member of staff has become ill, despite working for seven weeks with pupils who have family members on the front line of COVID-19 care. We have also increased options for further safety measures, with visors kindly provided by Broadwater School, thanks to our connection via TA Liz Barnett, and new thermometers ready to test temperatures as necessary.

As I have been writing this email, I have received another document from the DfE entitled 'Planning and Organising Re-opening Checklist'. This will help the staff and I to pull together further details for the phased return on 1st June. There will be another email next Tuesday with this information and an updated risk assessment.

Many thanks for the positive remarks about our provision and communication; these really buoyed our staff last week. It is an extremely challenging time for everyone and we should all recognise the individual difficulties and successes at play as we make our way through this historic and unprecedented period.

Kind Regards,
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